

ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 4613

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 4613 without my approval.

Last legislative term, I vetoed Senate Bill No. 2364 (Second Reprint) (2013) because it would have recklessly replaced New Jersey's reliable and cost-effective early voting process with a hasty and counterproductive system that would cost taxpayers \$25 million initially and millions more each subsequent year. Now, the Legislature seeks to once again upend the State's early voting system with the same proposal I vetoed last term, and, in addition, impose further cumbersome, costly, and inadvisable requirements on the State's election process. Again, I will not sign such a bill.

First, this bill does not reflect a genuine bipartisan effort to further improve the State's election system. Far from it, this bill is a manifest attempt to use election reform for political gain. Without being considered in legislative committee and before the Legislature could complete its own fiscal analysis, this 71-page bill passed, virtually along party lines, just one week after it was introduced. Tellingly, the bill lacks the support of the bipartisan group of county election officials who would be responsible for its implementation and administration.

As just one example among its many inadvisable provisions, this bill imposes automatic voter registration on anyone who applies for, or renews, a driver's license or identification card or changes their address, even if an individual does not want to register to vote or previously registered. All motor vehicle agencies in the State would be required to transmit the

electronic records of each individual's name, age, residence, citizenship, and digitized signature to the Secretary of State, who in turn, must transmit the information to county commissioners of registration, who in turn, must mail a notice to each person informing them of the process to decline being registered to vote. If the person declines registration, the State must process the refusal and remove the record; if the person does not decline within 21 days of the notice being mailed, the person is deemed registered.

I reject this government-knows-best, backwards approach that would inconvenience citizens and waste government resources for no justifiable reason. I do not believe the State fails to provide eligible voters with sufficient opportunities to register to vote. Quite the contrary, current voter registration opportunities are manifold. For example, citizens can easily obtain voter registration applications online or at motor vehicle agencies, county and municipal offices, schools, libraries, social services agencies, and other public offices. These facts explain why last year nine out of ten eligible voters in New Jersey were in fact registered to vote.

Ultimately, New Jersey taxpayers deserve better than to have their hard-earned tax dollars spent on thinly-veiled political gamesmanship and the State must ensure that every eligible citizen's vote counts and is not stolen by fraud. This 71-page bill, styled as "The Democracy Act," will not further democracy but endanger the State's longstanding and proven election system. Instead of playing politics with the State's electoral system, the sponsors should work across the aisle on responsible and cost-effective electoral reform.

Accordingly, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 4613
without my approval.

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Respectfully,
/s/ Chris Christie
Governor

Attest:

/s/ Thomas P. Scrivo
Chief Counsel to the Governor